

# Looking at Hollywood with Ed Sullivan

## Lew Ayres—Comeback King

By ED SULLIVAN

Hollywood.

LOOKING BACK at 1938, you are impressed with the comeback of Lew Ayres, the Minneapolis youngster. It sounds a trifle absurd to suggest that at his age Ayres would need anything as drastic as a comeback, because most boys at his age haven't arrived the first time. Yet it is a truth that the last year served as a pulmotor for Ayres, and the revivification process came just at the right moment, because he was down and pretty nearly out when he got the part in "Holiday" that returned him to Hollywood favor. If you will think back to the Hepburn picture, or if you saw it (not many did, judging from the box office returns), Ayres played the part of her brother. Bored with life, bored with his family, irritated by his pompous father, Ayres had a part that was actorproof, but he enlarged on it and embroidered it with touches of cinema wisdom that made him overnight one of the most discussed performers of the town.

Ayres didn't see the preview in Hollywood. It meant a great deal to him, and he was a nervous wreck. Early in the evening he started wandering around from one night club to another to make the time pass more quickly, and when I saw him at the Trocadero it was a little after 11 o'clock at night. "You were wonderful, Lew," I told him. "Honestly?" he asked. "Honestly," I assured him. "Thank God for that," he said, and there was so much emotion in the single line that you realized the tension with which he had awaited a verdict. He gulped down a glass of water hastily, picked up a napkin on the table instead of picking up the check which the waiter had brought, hastily realized his error, stuck the napkin in his pocket, forgot to leave a tip, and exited in general confusion.

You can pardon Ayres' happy confusion that night, because ten years were piling up on him. Just about ten years ago Ayres first became the sensation of this town. That was the night that Greta Garbo's "The Kiss" was previewed. Ayres scored a tremendous success. Then a year later, in January of 1930, Ayres again heard the Hollywood drums beating out a tattoo in his honor. That was at the premiere of "All Quiet on the Western Front," and that night they patted him on the back and assured him that he was the greatest young actor the town



A bit player named Ginger Rogers giggles at the marriage license bureau with Movie Star Lew Ayres. This was in 1934.

ever had seen. When he traveled east movie fans mobbed him for autographs and Europe hailed him as a celebrity.

Along the pathway to success Ayres met and married Ginger Rogers, at that time an ambitious youngster who had not won too many good breaks. She was playing bits; he was a great star. Then they separated and it seemed that as his star declined her star rose more and

more brightly. Ayres, the star, was reduced to bits, and Ginger, who had played bits, was fully launched on the partnership with Fred Astaire that was to make her one of the top names of her profession.

Say it for Ayres, and say it distinctly, that he never indulged in self-pity. He kept his chin up. As players do when the spotlight has been withdrawn from them, he started a

gradual withdrawal from the social life of Hollywood. Perhaps this was a measure of self-protection, because the head waiters in this town can make life very miserable for a has-been. In the full glow of stardom it was: "Yes, Mr. Ayres—right this way, Mr. Ayres. I have a ringside table for you." When a player starts skidding the head waiters check their obsequiousness as an ex-star checks his hat. "I'm sorry; I have a table in the third row, Mr. Ayres." But Lew never protested, never squawked. He just stayed away from the places he had once patronized. It saved money, and it saved heartaches and aggravation.

...

It was this period of varying fortune that Ayres needed to give him the emotional depth and understanding that he would need later on. The truth of the matter was that his greatest misfortune had been in succeeding when he was too young. Success won too easily has no value, because a performer thus is denied the apprenticeship that teaches him his trade; he is denied, too, the appreciation of success that a failure is able to generate.

His varying fortunes converted a care-free kid into a thinking man. His performance in "Holiday" indicated that he had been buffeted and kicked around. That's why it was a performance that caused the critics to toss their hats in the air and persuaded M-G-M to sign him for the "Young Dr. Kildare"



A scene from "Holiday"—the picture that started Ayres on his comeback trail. Left to right are Katharine Hepburn, Ayres, Cary Grant, Doris Nolan, and Harry Koller.

series. Ayres had been graduated from the class of good looking juveniles. He had learned something about the minor notes of life.

As a youngster he knew only the major notes. That was natural enough, because Ayres started out as one of the earliest of American crooners. He had

served vocal hitches with Henry Halstead's band, with Phil Harris' band, and with Ray West's outfit at the Coconut Grove. Dad had given him a musical appreciation, as the father had been a cellist with the Minneapolis Symphony. The son turned to the banjo and guitar.

...

Ayres is not the only Minnesota youngster who has staged a comeback in the last twelve-month. In a daily column I've already commented on the fine comeback achieved by Ann Southern, another Minneapolis youngster. She quit the films for a year, preferring to wait for the type of part she wanted instead of playing daffy roles at RKO. "Trade Winds" put her back in the important money class. Virginia Bruce, Joan Davis, and Walter Abel are a few others from Minnesota who are doing very nicely at this writing. In "There Goes My Heart" Miss Bruce showed a comedy flair that indicated her versatility and cinema growth. Maybe Fredric March is lucky for these Minnesotans; he played opposite Ann Southern in "Trade Winds" and played opposite Virginia Bruce in her flicker.

Lew Ayres hopes that 1939 will be his biggest year. "I've learned a lot I never knew before," he tells you with a twinkle in his eyes. "This time I'll hold on to success more tightly than I did ten years ago, because now it means something to me."

## Back 70 Years with The Tribune!

Monday, Dec. 19, 1938.

IN RECENT issues of The Chicago Sunday Tribune I read with keen interest in the Graphic section the story of the Tribune plant from its early inception, and a most particular interest it had for me, for it carried me back in memory to an early connection, since which time it has been my constant companion. That was seventy years ago—and as I dream I recall:

Do you remember 'way back when the river was the dividing line for the north and south street numbers, and The Tribune was located at 153-155 South Clark street, near Randolph street, in a two-story-and-basement building? Joseph Medill, owner and editor, occupied a little cubbyhole of an office partitioned off with upright flooring on the second floor. Rand, McNally & Co. were in an adjoining similar room as a job printing office. Alfred Cowles, part owner of the paper, was secretary; a Mr. Williston, treasurer; Mr. Flynn, cashier; Mr. Beauchamp, in charge of the mail-

The Tribune is pleased to print this letter from Louis Wilbur Felt, 703 Junior terrace, Chicago, who was inspired to reminisce about days on The Tribune seventy years ago by the series of articles describing this newspaper.

ing room, and Mr. Kahler, machinist, taking care of the mechanical part of getting out the paper—presses, folding machines, etc.

At that time all typesetting was done by hand and stereotyped as it is done today. All the paper was cut, each sheet folded once, making four pages about the same size as now. For a long time the papers were folded by hand by two Englishmen, William Burgess and his brother. Then as an improvement four Buckley folding machines were installed, and trouble started and centered on Mr. Kahler, a fine man and a good machinist, but from that day he was a changed man. For a short time the machines worked fine and it was a pleasure to watch them. Then they became tem-

peramental and tried to live up to their name, buckling, bunching, and tearing the paper. Then Mr. Kahler would jump in with hammer and tongs and sweat, and swear—and believe me, he was a master in using up all swear words and inventing new ones, oblivious of the audience gathered around him. This happened many years ago, but I still remember many of the words, but cannot recall the tune. Of course, that could not last, so after all the machines had undergone the same treatment they were sent away without recommendation and peace reigned again.

About this time the four-cylinder press was replaced by an eight-cylinder Hoe press which was the wonder of the century. This was a huge affair and rose through the basement and the next floor and took eight men to feed it.

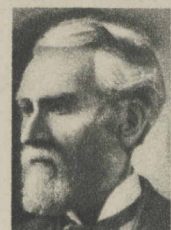
Mr. Williston left The Tribune and with a partner started

the Morning Republican on Washington street near Dearborn, but it was not a success. After many vicissitudes, with a change of name and owners, it passed out as an entity, but I think there is a trace of it in the present Herald and Examiner.

This article cannot be concluded without mentioning Wilbur F. Story and his paper, the Times, our competitor, located at Washington and La Salle streets. Mr. Story may be remembered for his aggressive competition, but he fared badly during the Civil war, for his strong sympathies with the south made him a target for window-smashing and abuse. After we had the paper tagged and wrapped and in bags it was loaded into an ordinary one-horse express wagon



Alfred Cowles



Joseph Medill

## Voice of the Movie Fan

Letters published in this department should be written on one side of the paper. If you wish a personal reply please inclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

Dear Mae Tinée: I have just seen two grand pictures. They are "That Certain Age" and "Boys' Town." I compliment Deanna Durbin and Jackie Cooper on their marvelous performance. Deanna's voice is lovely.

My heartiest congratulations go to the cast of "Boys' Town." That picture is grand, and I advise every one to see it. I intend to see it again. Spencer Tracy gave a wonderful performance. Mickey Rooney was swell. My hat is off to the whole cast. I think that little Pee Wee stole the show.

I think that such a man as Father Flanagan should get the support of every one. A man like that is—in plain American slang—simply swell.

Best of luck to you.

"BEB."

Editor's note: Glad you had such a good time watching "Boys' Town" and "That Certain Age." And the best of luck to YOU.

Dear Miss Tinée: In your review of the picture "Valley of the Giants" you wondered if the expression "okeh" was used

back in 1902. I just came across an ad running in a magazine which answers this perfectly, so I thought I'd pass it on to you, because the same question has often occurred to me. To quote: "It was Oct. 6, 1790, when the expression 'O. K.' first was used to signify approval. On that date Andrew Jackson 'proved a bill of sale which was O. K.' in the Court of Records of Sumner county, Tennessee. Probably source of the expression is the Choctaw word okeh, meaning 'It is so and in no other way.'"

And we think we're so modern! Yours very truly, MARION E. LINDSTROM.

Editor's note: Thanks a million for your interesting information. You're certainly okeh to have taken the time and trouble to pass it on to me. When in doubt again I'll think of you.

Dear Miss Tinée: I wonder if you would answer a question for me.

Sonja Henle stands high among my favorite movie stars, of which there are three or four women.

Why does she seem to be disliked by most writers in fan magazines? They certainly don't like her, for she is almost entirely neglected by them. Won't she grant interviews? Or what? They neither praise nor "pan" the little lady. They simply don't mention her at all!

While I am writing let me say a word for "Poison at the Box Office" Katy Hepburn. I think she is marvelous. I have never seen Garbo do a picture that Hepburn couldn't have handled better. Hepburn has glamor. She is convincing, and who else is so versatile? In a picture in

which she was a hill-billy girl with a few cards in her pocket and a prayer on her lips, healing the sick, she was wonderful. As Mary of Scotland she left nothing to be desired. In "Holiday" she was great. Success to you. ARTA LENHART.

Editor's note: Seems to me Sonja gets lots of mention. Miss Hepburn thanks you, I'm sure. So—for that last line—does yours truly.

Dear Miss Tinée: It is with interest that I read your Tribune every week, for I work in the local theater here in Calvert, Tex. One of the most popular stars on the screen here and in the rest of the state is Jane Withers.

Other people may prefer another star under contract to the same studio, but the patrons of our theater think that this other star is too sweet, while little Jane is very much like their own children. Her latest picture which was shown here was "Always in Trouble," and every one thought that it was her best picture to date.

I wonder if you could tell me the theaters she will appear at on her present



JANE WITHERS  
Popular star in the  
Texas region.

personal appearance tour? I believe Chicago will be one of the cities. Please print a picture of her. Thanks.

Sincerely, JAMES STYLES.  
Editor's note: Jane has many loyal friends. Sorry, but we don't know her itinerary. Here's her latest photo. Hope you like it.

Dear Miss Tinée: Would you please print the place Charles Boyer was born, also anything else about him you might know? Thank you. A FAN.

Editor's note: Glad to. Mr. Boyer was born in Figeac, France. Educated schools and lyceum of Figeac, then to Sorbonne in Paris. Hobbies are sport and music. In 1920 he made his dramatic debut in Paris in "Les Jardins de Murcie." He's married to "Pat" Paterson, a movie actress. You're welcome.

Dear Miss Tinée: I am writing this letter to you because I think a fellow named Donald Ragone said Don Ameche was a terrible singer. I think Don is a swell singer and actor. After all, wasn't he given a contract on account of his marvelous voice? Don Ameche is at the top, and he isn't high hat and he doesn't think he can sing just because he's at the top. I would like to see this fellow Donald Ragone and give him a piece of my mind. I am only 14 years old, but old enough to know good singing when I hear it. Yours truly,

ISABELLA CONDON.

Editor's note: Anyhow you know what you like, don't you, Isabella?

## Three Stars in Color

Full-color photographs of the three movie stars sketched here appear today on page one of the Picture Section.

### JOEL MCCREA

After Joel McCrea was graduated from Pomona college he crashed the movie gate in a Sam Woods production. His first featured rôle was in "The Jazz Age," with Douglas Fairbanks Jr. and Marceline Day. When "talkies" came Mr. McCrea found he had a fairly good voice, and with his school stage experience convinced Cecil B. De Mille he could handle the juvenile lead in "Dynamite." Joel was born in South Pasadena, Cal., Nov. 5, 1905. He has brown hair and blue eyes, weighs 185 pounds, and is 6 feet 2 inches tall. He's married to Frances Dee.

### FRANCES DEE

Frances Dee was born in Los Angeles, Nov. 26, 1907. When she was 7 years old her family moved to Chicago. While attending Hyde Park High school she became interested in theatricals and continued her work at the University of Chicago. After finishing school she obtained a position with The Chicago Tribune as a classified ad taker. Then one summer while visiting in California she got a job as an extra at one of the studios. A year later Paramount gave her her first film contract. In real life she's Mrs. Joel McCrea and has two children. She's 5 feet 4½ inches tall, weighs 110 pounds, and has greenish-gray eyes and brown hair.

### FREDDIE BARTHOLOMEW

Freddie Bartholomew was born in London, March 28, 1924. When he was 3 years old he went to live with his aunt, Millicent Bartholomew. She started coaching him, and when he was 3½ he appeared at a charity show, where he recited a poem. In 1934 his aunt brought him to Hollywood, where he was signed by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer for the name rôle in "David Copperfield." Since then he has played important rôles in "Anna Karenina," "Professional Soldier," "Lloyds of London," "Captains Courageous," "The Devil Is a Sissy," and many others. His favorite sports are horseback riding, tennis, and swimming. He has hazel eyes and brown hair.